

MARGARET DONNELLAN TODD  
COUNTY LIBRARIAN

September 11, 2006

TO: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: Margaret Donnellan Todd  
County Librarian



SUBJECT: STRATEGIC PLAN FOR LITERACY

On July 11, 2006, the Board requested the County Library to develop a strategic plan to diversify and expand the libraries' literacy programs, and submit a report to the Board within 60 days. Since that time, the Department has researched other public libraries and consulted with literacy experts and has identified the new directions that the Department will pursue in 2006-2007.

The linkage between libraries and literacy programs is a natural one, with the common goals of providing access to information for development, growth and learning. The County Library's Literacy Service has been in existence since the 1970's, primarily serving adult learners, with programs in Adult Basic Literacy and English as a Second Language. Trends have changed over time and the concept of "literacy" has been expanded beyond teaching adults how to read. The Library has traditionally focused its literacy program on those services approved and partially funded by the State Library. However, the funds have decreased, the numbers of eligible programs have diminished and the lengthy reporting requirements have made it no longer cost effective to pursue these funds. The Library is now free to redefine the literacy programs from a new perspective. Recently, the Department has also begun providing emergent literacy services to parents of very young children and some computer literacy classes.

At present, the Department is engaging in program review, including the redesign of program emphasis, selection of strategic locations for service, and realignment of operations. The following outlines the Library's action plans:

**Literacy Staffing:** The Library will review existing staffing to determine the most appropriate levels and type of staff needed for literacy services. The Department will develop recruitment plans for priority vacancies and fill the Literacy Coordinator and Literacy Librarian positions by February 28, 2007. The Library will also look at the current use of volunteers in literacy programs and develop plans for expanded use of volunteers.

**Literacy Programs:** The Library will identify all of the literacy programs and redefine the scope of adult literacy services. By April 30, 2007, Adult Literacy, Teen Literacy, Emergent Literacy, and Computer Literacy will be marketed under one umbrella for promotion of the services to the public. Adult literacy programs will include Adult Basic Literacy and English as a Second Language. The Library will review existing literacy courses from a variety of publishers, determine the most practical standard course, and ensure that all sites have sufficient quantities of current materials. The Library will also review the potential of computer-based self paced literacy courses for adults, standardizing on the best programs and locating the computer based literacy programs in welcoming settings with sufficient space.

**Literacy Sites:** One of the most important tasks is to determine the proper library sites for literacy tutoring and services, including sites in the unincorporated areas. There are currently 17 literacy centers, some more active than others. Most were established more than 10 years ago. The Library will review the demographics of its various communities, current community needs, the extent of the Library's capacity to staff and implement literacy programs with enough access across the Library service area, both incorporated and unincorporated, and the range of literacy programs. By March 31, 2007, the Department will determine where to best locate literacy services. Consideration will be given to use of other community spaces if library space is not adequate.

**Literacy Materials:** The library will conduct a thorough review of existing literacy training and support materials - books, workbooks, trainers' manuals, software, and supplemental items. By April 30, 2007 all outdated and worn materials will be discarded and replaced with sufficient copies of current and standardized resources. Selected computer resources with new materials that reflect the latest research and techniques will be added to the collection.

**Tutor Training:** The Library will identify and implement a more up-to-date efficient tutor training program. By March 31, 2007, standard teaching methods and materials will be established, and the Library will consider whether to contract out for tutor training or develop in-house expertise, or a combination of both. The training program will also add tutor support and adult learner orientation elements.

**Emergent Literacy:** The Library will explore the expansion of its successful Family Place Program, currently at 14 library sites. This program provides parents with information, skills and resources to aid them in becoming their child's first teacher. It is also designed to transform the Library into a welcoming family-friendly atmosphere, conducive to encouraging parents and their children to share books and read together. By March 31, 2007, the Library will design training module to increase staff knowledge about the importance of reading and early literacy experiences for young children and their unique role in providing early literacy training to parents and caregivers.

**Teen Literacy:** The Library is concerned about the large numbers of high school dropouts in the Los Angeles area. Staff will work with Educational Coordinating Council, school districts and community partners to determine the feasibility of a pilot Teen Literacy program by April 30, 2007. This program will link teens with low literacy levels to tutors who can work with them on reading goals. The Library will continue to serve in a support capacity and will not supplant school accountability for student performance, but will assist in responding to community need.

**Computer Literacy:** The Library currently offers a small number of basic computer skills classes for the public, as space and staffing allow. By February 28, 2007, staff will develop standard computer literacy programs for staff and volunteers to use and expand the number of libraries offering classes.

**Marketing Literacy:** By December 31, 2007, the Library will develop and implement a broad based information campaign to publicize the available literacy services. This marketing program will include providing print information in local libraries, developing enhanced website information, doing outreach to community agencies about the programs, and training staff to be thoroughly knowledgeable about the available literacy services and to look for opportunities to identify related community services and partners, and to publicize library services.

**Literacy Referral System:** Many community agencies and other libraries provide literacy services across Los Angeles County. By December 31, 2007, library staff will develop and implement a literacy referral system and make that information readily available to staff and the public. In networking with other providers, the Library's own services for their customers are strengthened.

**Partnerships:** The Library will review and expand its literacy program partnerships, building on those already in place with Operation Read, Probation Department, Mental Health and other departments, as well as community agencies and volunteer centers.

**Performance Measurement:** By December, 2007, the Library will establish performance measures in order to evaluate the success of the new approach to Literacy Service.

The Library will also identify areas needing additional funding to improve literacy services and include them in the 2007-08 Budget Request.

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c: Chief Administrative Officer  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
Board Liaisons